

April 16, 1999

Dr Stephen Sundlof
FDA Center for Veterinary Medicine
7500 Standish Place
Rockville, MD 20855

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Dear Dr Sundlof:

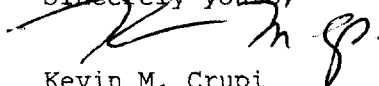
I'm writing to urge the FDA to ban the use of growth promoting antibiotics in farm animals. The increasing use of these drugs to promote unnatural farm animal growth--and more profits for big agribusiness--is causing a proliferation of dangerous antibiotic-resistant bacteria and putting unfair pressure on family farmers who properly care for their animals.

In January, the Food and Drug Administration's Veterinary Medicine Advisory Committee met to discuss antibiotic use on farm animals, the great majority of which today are raised in brutal, filthy factory farms. However, most of the antibiotics administered by agribusiness to animals have nothing to do with treating the illnesses they develop in these hellish places. Scientists discovered in the 1950s that farmers could enhance growth by feeding low levels of antibiotics to poultry and pigs. Today, epidemiologists at the Centers for Disease Control estimate that 80% of the antibiotics used on factory farms are for growth promotion. Since only large agribusiness can afford to feed their animals these drugs, they have gained an unfair advantage over the already overburdened small family farmer, who must rely on feeding a nutritious diet and proper husbandry to raise bigger animals.

There is increasing evidence that bacteria in animals become resistant to antibiotics they are fed and that these bacteria infect people through the meat, milk, and eggs they consume. These resistant strains are a serious and growing threat to human health because people infected with these germs do not respond to treatment and often face extended illness and/or death.

Several health advocacy groups have petitioned the FDA to ban the use of drugs as growth enhancers that are used to treat humans. Late last year, the European Union voted to ban four such growth-promoting antibiotics. Although agribusiness bitterly opposes this idea, it's time the FDA put the welfare of consumers above corporate profits, don't you think? I urge the FDA to ignore political pressure from agribusiness and outlaw the use of antibiotics to promote growth in farm animals. Tell factory farmers to practice better husbandry to raise larger animals instead of the dangerous overuse of antibiotics. Thank you.

Sincerely yours,



Kevin M. Crupi
129 E. Prospect St Apt A
Marquette, MI 49855

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